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Kendall Library to move to new location

Residents will have input on what goes into facility

By KIM JACKSON

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A new Kendall Library will be built on a 3.5-acre city-owned site on North Eldridge Parkway near Harris County's Terry Hershey Park.

The existing Kendall Library, 14330 Memorial Drive, will be closed when the new library opens, city officials said.

About \$9.1 million has been set aside in District G Councilwoman Pam Holm's capital improvement projects budget for the project.

Issa Dadoush, the city of Houston's director of building services, said the city would start advertising Friday for design firms to guide the city through the programming phase of the Kendall Library construction project.

Once the contractor is selected, approved by city council and a contract signed — in about 60 to 90 days — the city would plan community meetings to gather more information on what residents want to see in their new library.

The design firm would take that information, as well as information gathered at past community meetings and define the scope of the project, Dadoush said.

City officials plan to build a new structure that is up to 35,000 square feet and fits into a park-like setting, but a detailed drawing has not been mapped out.

"They will look at the site and see how the building fits best on it," said Dadoush.

Once the first phase is complete in three to six months, the project will move into the detailed design phase, which will take nine months to a year.

Construction is the third and final step, which will take another nine months to one year.

Several residents who live near the old Kendall Library on Memorial have asked what will happen to that building after the library moves out.

Doris Harris, who raised her family in Wilchester subdivision near the Kendall Library, said she was surprised and shocked to hear the library was moving.

"I am very sorry to see it go," said Harris, who now lives in Memorial Drive townhomes near Town & Country.

"But if it has to go, I'd like to see the building turned into a community center with meeting rooms that could be used by groups, like my bridge club."

Diane Swan, a Nottingham Forest resident, said a Houston Police Department substation or storefront could be a good fit for that building.

"I would like to see something that both the community and the school district could use as opposed to a commercial building," Swan said.

Swan served on a committee — made up of Spring Branch Independent School District staff and parents, Kendall Library staff and community members — which recommended over a year ago that the school district should sell a half-acre of land that sits on the southeast corner of Fern Drive and Memorial Drive to the city to expand the existing library.

The city did not accept the offer, and the decision was made to move the library to the new location.

Swan said the committee did not discuss ideas for the building if the library moved.

Dadoush said city officials have not decided what will be done with the building, but community input is welcome.

He said when it nears time for the library to close down and move, the city would circulate a notice to all departments asking if they have a need for the Kendall Library building.

If no internal departments request the building, then the city would make the decision whether or not to convert it to another use, such as a community center, or list it as surplus property and sell it at auction.

"Once we get community feedback on what they would like to see done with the building, we could do a feasibility study to determine if that facility is needed and if it can be financially supported," Dadoush said.

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